



The DC Workhouse and Reformatory District encompasses the primary built features of a Progressive era penal institution. The period of significance dates from 1910 - 1961. In 1910 the District of Columbia established the Workhouse to house prisoners who had not been convicted of violent crimes, and were to serve short sentences. Prisoners at the Workhouse were to be rehabilitated in part by working on an industrial farm developed in conjunction with the prison complex. In 1914, DC established the Reformatory nearby, which was to house prisoners with longer sentences. Progressive rehabilitation was focused on industrial production and vocational training. Both of these facilities were run as open institutions with no bars or walls. Because the open plan did not adequately address the security risks associated with some of the new inmates, construction of a wall Penitentiary complex was initiated as a division of the Reformatory in 1930. The grounds of the prison property supported a wide range of agricultural and industrial activities, both of which offset the financial operation of the complex, but more importantly provided opportunities to educate and train inmates for their reintroduction into society. In particular, the prison maintained crop fields, pasture for livestock, a dairy farm, orchards, a brick kiln, and various other endeavors. The majority of the buildings, structures, walks, and other features of the prison complex were constructed of bricks manufactured on the property by the inmates.

[Nomination Form](#)



D.C. Workhouse & Reformatory Historic District
Listed in the National Register of Historic Places February 16, 2006;
additional documentation added March 27, 2012

